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FREGE'S CONCEPTS OF SINN AND BEDEUTUNG

by

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to investigate a number of logical and epistemological considerations underlying Frege's thought.

It will be argued that Frege's views on the nature of objects and of language lead him into serious difficulties. These difficulties result not only in certain dilemmas and inconsistencies within his theory, but also make it impossible for him to give an adequate account of the connection of language to reality.

The thesis is divided into eight sections, most of which deal respectively with some important aspect of Frege's theory. An attempt is made to elucidate the difference and connection between the Sinn (sense) and Bedeutung (referent) of both single words and complete sentences. This account will require a discussion of the nature of objects signified by language, of the conditions under which words are significant, and of the relation of sentences to truth.

Section (a) introduces the thesis. Sections (b) and (c) discuss the meaning of the term Bedeutung and the relation of linguistic signs to the objects they signify. Sections (d) and (e) concern the relation of signs to their Sinn, and the meaning of that term. Sections (f) and (g) constitute a discussion of sentences in the framework of Frege's theory. The final section (h) serves as a conclusion to the thesis.

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- (a) The relation between Frege's Begriffsschrift and its epistemological basis

"Equality challenges our thought in raising questions in connection with it, which are not altogether easy to answer. Is equality a relation? A relation between objects, or between names or signs for objects?"¹

Frege begins his essay Sinn und Bedeutung with these words and goes to assert his position which expresses equality (identity) as a relation of signs which signify. Someone might object to this assertion and suggest that we could hardly assert the equality of signs if the objects themselves were not equal or identical. Frege would probably retort that such an objector does not take into account the fact that we often do assert the equality of significantly different signs, as for instance in the proposition:

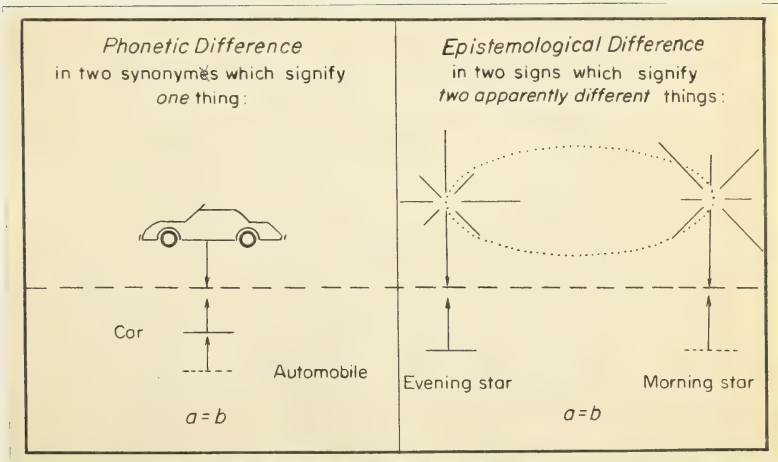
¹ Gottlob Frege. Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung. Fünf logische Studien. Edited and introduced by Günther Patzig; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen, 1962; p. 38. When quoting Frege, I shall refer to this edition throughout. For guidance in my translation I have consulted the Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, by Peter Geach and Max Black; Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1952.

"The evening star is the morning star". ($a=b$)

That is to say, such a statement must not be confused with a statement like, say:

"A car is an automobile." ($a=b$)

This latter and similar statements express the equality of insignificantly different signs; they are merely equations of a phonetic difference in identical synonyms. Frege is interested only in the former sort of equality which expresses an epistemological difference of signs. Such signs express an important difference about the object, in spite of signifying the same object. A diagram may help to demonstrate Frege's distinction:



Frege argues that "a difference can arise only if the difference of the sign corresponds to a difference of the referent's mode of being given".¹

This laconic statement shows clearly that Frege was not only concerned with a consistently worked out logical system, but also with the correspondence of such a system to reality.²

Thus a systematic approach to the meaning of Frege's notion has the task of elucidating not only Frege's interconnecting definitions, but also the nature of "objects" signified. Consequently I propose the following order of investigation:

- (1) The meaning of the term Bedeutung.
- (2) The sign and its relation to Bedeutung.
- (3) The meaning of the term Sinn.

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

² For this reason, Frege calls his logical system a Begriffsschrift, a term which could be translated with the phrase "sign system for concepts". The word "Begriffsschrift" has been sometimes translated "logical symbolism" (e.g. by Ogden). The term "logical symbolism" does not seem quite adequate, since it might lead one to think of a system of logical signs crosswise defined, but otherwise disconnected from any epistemology. In order to avoid any misinterpretation, I shall render "Begriffsschrift" with the phrase "sign system for concepts" throughout.

- (4) The sign and its relation to Sinn.
- (5) The sentence and its relation to Sinn.
- (6) The sentence and its relation to Bedeutung.

Arranging my investigation in this order, I hope to bring out a number of epistemological views which lie behind Frege's doctrines of sign and sentence.

(b) The meaning of the term Bedeutung

Frege defines the word Bedeutung in a new and strange way. Usually in ordinary German the "Bedeutung" of a word is the significance or meaning of that word. That is, the term "Bedeutung" is used in German much in the same way as the English word "meaning" ("significance"). Thus one could say in German the Bedeutung of the word "evening star" is "a star which can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset". It would hardly be an exaggeration to maintain that there are many people who know what they mean by the word "evening star" without knowing that the astronomers refer to it as "Venus" and have identified the same star at

different times and locations in the sky, etc. These people may well be ignorant about such concepts as self-identity, physical masses and planetary orbits. When referring to the Bedeutung of the term "evening star" they might not at all presuppose astronomical, physical or logical hypotheses about the star, but only the frequent appearance of a twinkling light in the west in the dusky sky. In other words, the normal usage of the word "Bedeutung" comes much closer to what Frege means by Sinn (sense), as we shall see. In contrast to this ordinary understanding of Bedeutung, Frege employs his term for the object itself to which the word or sign refers. Frege says: "The Bedeutung of a proper name is the object itself".¹

It is important to recognize that Frege does not mean the object "as it is given to us" or "as it appears to us".² Thus in contrast to the normal German meaning, Frege defines the term "Bedeutung of a word" as something entirely objective in itself which does not depend in any

¹ Ibid., p. 42. My underlining.

² Ibid., p. 39.

way on what the speaker knows about it.¹ In order to avoid any confusion it may be a good procedure to retain Frege's own term "Bedeutung". Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the term is usually translated "Reference" or "Referent".²

In his peculiar way Frege proposes that if we knew a particular Bedeutung completely, we should be able to decide at once what Sinn (sense) belongs to that Bedeutung. We shall never arrive at such a complete knowledge, Frege concludes calmly.³ He does not furnish any example for this statement, though it appears from the context that he wanted to explain why we cannot enumerate all possible appearances of a particular object in spite of having knowledge about it. Taking Frege's previous example of the evening star, we could therefore say that given any specific appearance, a person might not be able to decide that the Bedeutung of the "evening star" is the planet "Venus", since it is always possible that some future appearance might force him to reject his previous assumption. Even a scientist is unable to determine all

¹ Ibid., p. 47. Frege additionally explains the term "Bedeutung", as "das Objektive".

² E.g. Geach and Black: Translation from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege; op. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 40.

possible appearances which might belong to the Bedeutung of the sign "Venus". It is easy to see that Frege cannot refuse accepting our partial ignorance about all possible aspects of the object itself. He had to admit that we cannot even in principle enumerate all possible appearances (Arten des Gegebenseins) of a particular Bedeutung. There is the independent object itself on the one side and on the other side the different appearance of the object which alone enable us to know about that particular object. This accounts for Frege's choice of the term "to belong" for describing this peculiar connection between Bedeutung and manner of appearance. Besides, it should be mentioned that Frege subsequently admits that we are sometimes wrong in presupposing the existence of a particular sign's Bedeutung. Thus according to Frege, we could always add the following reservation: "If there is such and such Bedeutung", whenever we speak about the Bedeutung of a particular sign.¹

Nonetheless, this explication should not let us forget that Frege did not question his general assertion,

¹ Ibid., p. 44.

namely his optimistic presupposition of a sign's possibility to signify a Bedeutung, and that this Bedeutung is the object itself.¹ Frege's cautious remarks concerning the possible non-existence of any particular Bedeutung must be recognized as a clever limitation of his general theory of the sign's potentiality to signify. Frege's general presupposition (Voraussetzung) of objects themselves as the Bedeutungen of signs is limited by his skeptical reservation (Vorbehalt) that we shall neither ever know the whole Bedeutung of a particular signifying sign, nor ever be able to gain full certainty of its existence. In other words, Frege realizes that it is impossible to find even one example which could demonstrate our complete certainty of one specific Bedeutung. He has to presuppose object themselves without being ever able to prove their existence. Frege probably felt that nobody could demand a proof for the existence of an object itself, since he asserted also the impossibility of proving beyond doubt the existence of any specific sign's Bedeutung. In this manner Frege produces a theory which appears "irrefutable" in spite of any empirical evidence and simultaneously appears to assert facts about the empirical world.

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

(c) The sign and its relation to Bedeutung

Frege's skeptical assertion of our cognitive limitation about the presupposed object itself stands in contrast to his optimistic assertion of our freedom in the employment of signifying signs. There can be no doubt that he assumes that the subsequent signification of a sign represents an arbitrary connection (Verknüpfung and verbinden). In other words, the assignment of a connection between a sign and its referent is a free and arbitrary act. Frege holds that we cannot forbid anybody from producing arbitrarily any sort of sign for signifying a particular Bedeutung.¹ He seems to have very little doubt about the validity of his assertion. It seems that Frege is here speaking as a logician only and somehow unaware that he is actually also representing an epistemology of a "sign system for concepts" (Begriffsschrift).

Are we really free to produce arbitrarily any sort of sign for signifying any particular Bedeutung?

¹ Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

We should notice the limitation which we encounter when attempting to apply Frege's apodictic principle of human beings as free sign producers. Taking the nearest dictionary we find that most words do not refer to a unique object, but to whole classes of objects, as apples, apes and animals. All these latter words are what Frege calls concept-words.¹ Let us now consider only proper names which refer to one object only. It seems that these proper names are actually not the type of signs which we normally encounter within a scientific language. It seems that what we call the exact sciences have a language which refers normally to whole groups of objects. It is obvious that scientists make propositions about things like masses, molecules, atoms, species, social strata, etc. etc. Normally scientists do not refer to a specific object itself, say this sphere, this apple, this atom or this bourgeois, but refer to classes of these objects. Newton's laws are not only applicable to one planet, say to Venus. Frege's whole range of examples is misleading. For instance, he suggests that the discovery of the fact that

¹ Begriff und Gegenstand, op. cit., p. 67 ff.

there is not a new sun every day has had very great consequences in astronomy.¹ Surely, this is just Frege's opinion. He seems to stress again and again that scientists are particularly concerned with the re-identification of a particular object, but this is certainly questionable. Galileo's mechanical laws for instance, pertain to something which holds for all physical objects within a certain situation. Frege's examples are often statements about a discovery of our previous error in consistently signifying one and the same instance of an object. Yet it appears from the above quoted text that Frege wished also to include concept-words within his apodictic principle of free sign producers. If this is the case, then we should like to ask whether we can ever produce a new sign without transferring from, and relating to previous signs which we have learned within our native tongue, or later acquired as foreign languages. Suppose somebody decides to substitute a new sign for an old one. Frege would have to say that nobody can forbid me to signify one of my old pipes from now on by a bodily movement, instead of a word say, by

¹ Ibid., p. 38.

standing on my head. I might even be able to convince my friends and acquaintances to accept my new sign without being "persuaded" to consult a psychiatrist. Yet any time I shall stand on my head all of us will know at once that I actually mean my old pipe; i.e. we shall for a time at least "translate" back into the old terminology, our mother tongue.

But we have not yet considered the whole range of entirely new appearances which might be signified by whatever signs we wish to produce. Here we notice again that we seem to employ old signs for the new objects. We talk about the "feedback" of an "electrical current", about the "iron curtain" and the "atombomb", knowing that there is actually neither a running nor feed in the wire, that the iron curtain is neither iron nor a curtain, and that any bomb is "made up" of atoms. This essentially metaphoric character of signs for new appearances permeates our whole language. A look into an etymological dictionary should suffice to convince us. Of course, we can say that we are free to produce any new sign insofar as we can imagine ourselves producing signs, as in a course of symbolic logic or in a phonological seminar. Similarly, I can imagine all

sorts of things which are possible; I can imagine myself free in buying a pistol and shooting myself or my friend, Professor Propro. Perhaps I might even aim at de Gaulle or Mao Tse Tung. I can easily imagine all these cases though my difficulties in achieving my "freedom" differs from case to case considerably. Frege seems to be speaking as a logician only when he asserts our freedom to produce any sign whatsoever for a Bedeutung. He considers the epistemology of the signifying sign in abstraction from the signifier; or, in other words, he considers only the connection between signs and the world of appearances without considering the connection between the producer of the sign and his other signs, his language and his society.

Nonetheless, Frege's theory of arbitrarily signifying signs should also be considered as he meant it to be: from the viewpoint of the connection of signs with objects. What sort of connection does the arbitrarily signifying sign establish with the object? What are the conditions and what is the mode of this connection?

Frege asserts that such signs signify a Bedeutung only if they are proper names and as such refer to a definite object (bestimmter Gegenstand). It is always

the particular object alone which can be connected on to by a signifying sign, a proper name.¹ For instance, I may point at an apple lying in front of me on my desk and write down the proper name. My sign: "this apple", is to be understood as a proper name whose sole and only Bedeutung is the object in front of me, i.e. this apple.

It is clear that my sign: "this apple" has no apparent similarity to the apple in front of me. The sign "simply" connects to its Bedeutung. Now we might ask: to what exactly does the sign point or connect? Just what is the Bedeutung? What is the apple itself? It does not seem possible to state the different properties of the object. I could, one would think, signify anew: "this red apple". But can I really do this? Since what I am doing now is attributing the concept "red" to the Bedeutung of the sign: "this apple". Suppose I turn the apple around and it appears now to be green. Considering all this, we are in a better

¹ Ibid., p. 39. It is here important to note that Frege sometimes uses the term "sign" also for the predicative-term which signifies as its Bedeutung a concept (Cf., Section (h)). Yet Frege seems to maintain here that signs cannot signify a concept or relation. His uncertain usage cannot be fully avoided, though it should be clear that we accept for our purpose the definition quoted above.

position to see why the signifying sign "this apple" cannot connect to particular attributes of the apple, since the sign must somehow connect to the "whole" apple, and thus surely to the red and green side alike. It appears that Frege felt that a sign cannot connect to any particular aspect under which the object is given, otherwise the sign would have to point and connect at the same time to at least two different points or aspects, or indeed to all aspects. Hence it would be impossible to have a precisely signifying sign, if the sign were to connect simultaneously to two or more "objects". Ambiguous signs could never serve as starting points for scientific theories. Though Frege never pronounced it, strictly speaking the object itself can be represented only as a self-identical point. How otherwise could any signifying sign point or connect precisely? It is such or similar considerations which probably led Frege to demand a sharp distinction between a sign's Bedeutung and its Sinn (sense), a distinction between the object itself and the concept, viz. the way an object is given. Frege calls the manner in which an object is given

its Sinn (sense) which of course, must be expressed through the sign.¹

From section (b) of this paper we know already that the sign signifies "more" than our knowledge of its Bedeutung, viz. the object considered apart from any knowledge we might or might not have of it. In other words, the Bedeutung is the object itself and the Sinn is what we see and know about it. We must subtract completely all known aspects under which the object appears as modi of the Sinn. Actually what remains is less than any of our senses can perceive, viz. only the presupposed and independent object itself which, due to our partial ignorance, is more than we can ever know about it. Frege's arbitrary signs thus signify

¹ Ibid., p. 40. Just as with the term Bedeutung, the German word Sinn means roughly the same as the English term sense. Since both Fregean key terms, viz. Bedeutung and Sinn, are used in sharp contradistinction, which is absent from their ordinary meaning in both languages, I shall abstain from translating either term. Both words must be understood as technical terms, but are of course, related to the normal uses of the words. In one of his examples, Frege calls it a simile, he compares the moon itself as Bedeutung and its image (solides Bild) in the telescope as the Sinn (sense) of the proper name: "moon". (Ibid., p. 43). Frege considers this a good illustration of his distinction.

never the apparent object, but the presupposed object itself. To be sure, an absolute certainty about any particular sign's Bedeutung cannot be established, but the presupposed object permits us to manipulate any sign's Bedeutung as a reality which by itself is what it is, viz. a self-identical "object", stripped of all possible qualities. It is neither more nor less than the logical concept of self-identity. We shall return to this topic in section (g).

(d) The meaning of the term Sinn

Frege proposes that we should recognize that a sign is connected not only to its Bedeutung, but also to its Sinn. The Sinn contains "the manner of the being given (Art des Gegebenseins)".¹ We might wonder why Frege employs such a strange expression for his definition of Sinn. One would expect him to say that the Sinn is the way in which a Bedeutung is given. Obviously Frege is forced to such a cautious definition because he wants to maintain that a sign

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

may well have a Sinn, but that this Sinn need not necessarily answer to a Bedeutung.¹

Frege's example of the planet Venus might be of some help to us. Let us suppose there was an early "astronomer" who had not yet realized that the evening star is identical with the morning star. Let him now express the Sinn of his signifying sign: "evening star", as "the star which can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset."² It seems that for Frege the Bedeutung can never change; it was, is and will be always the same, viz. the object itself. Our early "astronomer" might well have used the proper name: "evening star". The question arises: must he have presupposed an object; in other words, did he presuppose an object itself without knowing the language and theory of a mechanical or logical universe? Could he not have presupposed an

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

² Here it is worth mentioning Frege's assertion that the Sinn of a sign is not only non-subjective, but often also the "common property" of mankind throughout the ages. In order to maintain this objectivity of Sinn, Frege introduced a third term beside Sinn and Bedeutung, viz. that of presentation (Vorstellung). A presentation is an "internal picture" associated with a sign; it is permeated by feelings and thus a "part or mode of the single soul". Since they are subjective, presentations play no part in Frege's "system for concepts". (Ibid., pp. 41 - 44.)

epiphany of some god, a mirage or hint from some supernatural force? After all the star can be seen as a twinkling and moving light, and we can easily imagine that he presupposed the presence of an everchanging will or energy.

Attempting to clarify the relation between a sign's Bedeutung and its Sinn, Frege suggests that "a sign answers to (entspricht) a definite Sinn and the latter in return to a definite Bedeutung."¹ As we have just seen, our early astronomer might well have employed the proper name "evening star", knowing its Sinn, but without knowing its Bedeutung. Yet the Sinn of a sign "answers to its definite Bedeutung" according to Frege; hence by referring to the evening star, even an early stargazer must have signified the object itself without knowing what he did and what an object itself was. Now Frege's theory, according to which the Bedeutung of a sign is the object considered only in itself, makes it impossible not only for an early astronomer to know what he is referring to, but also, for example, a Hegelian. In order to remain consistent with his thought, Frege holds the strange position that a scientist

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

who, say, accepted the Hegelian view did not know what he was talking about. Such a man, say, even in spite of being successful in his field, did not know what he was doing, since he "presupposed" only self-realizing reason as the manifestation of the Absolute Idea.

On the one hand it is essential for Frege to define the Bedeutung of a sign in such a way that it could not be mistaken for its Sinn. On the other hand a sign might have connected in earlier days to a "Bedeutung" which became later its Sinn; mankind may have gathered additional knowledge to the previous "Bedeutung". Suppose that another astronomer signified the evening star "knowing" that it is an object itself, but without "knowing" yet that he signified actually the planet Venus. Say he watched for the star again early in the morning. Not knowing that the planet "Venus" was now in the eastern sky, he could have still searched, (of course unsuccessfully) for the fading "evening star" in the western sky. Thus he presupposed and signified a non-existent object itself in the western sky, by employing and somehow connecting the Sinn with the Bedeutung of the sign "evening star". Yet Frege holds that

the sign "evening star" as well as the sign "Venus" signifies the same Bedeutung, viz. the object itself.

Remember a Bedeutung must be objective. Now we want to know: how can a Bedeutung which does not allow any Sinn and has no properties, connect to its Sinn?

As we have seen in a previous section (b), Frege presupposes as a sign's Bedeutung the object itself which can never be completely known. Of course, we can expand our knowledge of a Bedeutung, but there will always remain an unknowable aspect to it. For the sake of simplicity, let us call the unknowable aspect of a Bedeutung: "Bx". Since the "Bx" of any particular sign cannot be fully eliminated, we can never be completely certain about our identification of any purported objects. We can thus easily understand why new information about a Bedeutung might force us to abandon our previous knowledge. An early astronomer who did not know that light needed time to travel, might have presupposed as object an extinct star, whose light he saw. Say he named the star "Twinkle". His identification of the appearance, viz. the reflected image in his telescope with the presupposed object itself is illusory since "Twinkle" has exploded long

ago. A later astronomer who gained new information about a part of his predecessor's "signified Bx", had to eliminate "Twinkle" from the catalogue of existing stars. His additional knowledge about the speed of light and other facts, enabled him to assert "Twinkle's" disappearance. Yet the apparent reduction of his predecessor's ignorance "Bx", does not eliminate his own "Bx" included in his signification. New information might force another astronomer to presuppose "Twinkle's" existence again, or a new identity of "Twinkle". Thus we can never be completely sure about our presupposing of a Bedeutung, and we shall never be able to eliminate our ignorance about "Bx" since there must always remain a "Bx". Consequently our present ignorance about any particular sign's "Bx" may include ignorance as to the actual existence of the Bedeutung in which "Bx" itself is included. Perhaps considerations like this made Frege expand his skepticism and introduce his reservation: "If there is such and such a Bedeutung".¹

We must avoid confusing Frege's distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung and recognize that the acquisition of all sorts of new knowledge about the way an object is given

¹ Ibid., p. 44.

does not by itself constitute knowledge per se of the Bedeutung. It only enables us either to keep, or to "expand", or to reject a previously presupposed object. The early astronomer who saw "Twinkle", knew that the "solid picture" (das reelle Bild) in his telescope was not the star. Only his knowledge of the image enabled him to presuppose "Twinkle's" existence as an object. He presupposed "Twinkle's" identity without ever hoping to fly to "Twinkle" and to inspect it. Even if he had done so, he would not be in a much better position. As we have seen before with the apple on my desk, it is less, or "more" if you want, than the sum of all its appearances. Thus we are, according to Frege, always driven to suppose that a sign's Bedeutung is nothing else, but the object, considered only in itself and not with regard to our manner of perceiving it. Besides, it appears now that the object itself though presupposed to exist, cannot be known at all, since its unknowable aspect "Bx" hangs like the sword of Damocles above its very existence.

What then is, we might ask, the gain of our knowledge about the appearances of an object, which itself cannot be known at all? Can we really even reduce the "Bx"

of a particular sign's Bedeutung? No doubt, Frege feels that we acquire more knowledge in spite of the formidable "Bx". Remember that he suggests: "The discovery that not every day a new sun rises, was one which brought about the greatest consequences in astronomy".¹ Frege felt that we acquire new knowledge by identification of new appearances with a previous, or newly presupposed object itself. We can expand our knowledge of a Bedeutung insofar as we can identify new appearances with it, or vice versa. Say, an ignorant astronomer presupposed and signified one Bedeutung for the evening star and another for the morning star. Suppose that some day he realized that the sign "evening star" signified the identical Bedeutung as the sign "morning star"; in other words, he identified the Bedeutung of both signs. Now we want to know, how is it possible to correlate and identify two Bedeutungen ($a=b$)? Surely, rather than identifying an appearance with a Bedeutung or one Bedeutung with another Bedeutung, we seem to correlate different appearances

¹ Ibid., p. 38. Furthermore, Frege's essay "Über die wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift" is a good exposition of his belief in scientific evolution via "logical expansion with self-identical concepts". (Op. cit., p. 89 ff.)

with one another and say that they belong to the same Bedeutung.
 Similarly, the astronomer who knew about the speed of light,
 employed his knowledge about the appearance to presuppose
 "Twinkle's exit". Thus all sorts of knowledge about appear-
 ances may enable us to presuppose either existence, or a
 negation of a previously presupposed existence. The pre-
 supposed Bedeutung, the object itself, can never furnish
 any information about itself. Stripped of all connected
Sinn, a sign's Bedeutung appears to be nothing else but
 a logical "something", with the sole characteristic of being
 simply identical with itself. Any particular sign's
Bedeutung is one, and only one particular thing, which
 receives its identity from our presupposition of self-
 identity and permanence. Frege's Bedeutung has all the
 properties of a logical abstraction, viz. of a word (logos)
 which is only identical with itself.

(e) The sign and its relation to Sinn

Frege also tells us that signs might well express a Sinn without being expected to signify a Bedeutung; consider for instance the name "Odysseus" in the Homeric epic. This name has Sinn, since we can think with the name "Odysseus" without necessarily adjusting a Bedeutung to it, i.e. without assuming that Odysseus in fact existed. Frege proposes that the thought of "Odysseus" remains the same, regardless whether the name has a Bedeutung or not.¹

To be sure, Frege is particularly interested in signs which also signify a Bedeutung. As we know, he distinguishes between two aspects in a signifying sign, viz. it signifies a Bedeutung and it expresses a Sinn.² However, Frege maintains that a signifying sign connects (verbinden) to both: Sinn as well as Bedeutung.³ We might now ask, how does a sign connect to its Sinn which it expresses, and how does a sign express its Sinn to which it connects?

¹ Ibid., p. 45.

² Ibid., p. 44.

³ Ibid., p. 39.

Let us reconsider the example of the evening star. The Sinn of this name was something like: "The star which can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset." Strangely enough, in his essay Sinn und Bedeutung, Frege expresses the Sinn of a sign only once and that in a footnote which is not added in order to demonstrate the expression of a sign's Sinn.¹ Nevertheless, Frege does express in this footnote the Sinn of the name "Aristotle" with the phrase: "The pupil of Plato and the teacher of Alexander the Great." We can now see that whatever sign we might imagine, it is evident that we cannot express its Sinn without employing a sort of descriptive phrase. This should not astonish us, if we consider that a sign's Sinn connects always to a certain situation, viz. the referent's manner of being given; in other words: the appearance under which "something" is given. If we look at the Sinn of the sign "evening star", we notice a whole complex of given aspects, viz. "a twinkling star" - "in the sky" - "in the west" - "soon after sunset". Hence we have to use our "mind", or our "understanding", or some such thing to connect these different aspects of the appearance

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

into one coinciding "thing".

This is easy to understand in the case of the "evening star", where we connect these coinciding aspects to the presupposed object itself, but what happens in the case of a fictitious name out of a novel? We certainly also connect these aspects in our "mind", how could we otherwise even imagine a fictitious person? We certainly seem to connect these fictitious aspects to something, but what is this "something"? After learning from Homer's narrative about Odysseus' different aspects, say "king of Ithaca" - "husband of Penelope" - etc. etc., we seem to presuppose also a referent which, of course, is not an object itself, since no such object ever existed. Is our presupposition less justified than that of Frege's Bedeutung? What are our justifications for any presupposition? We might think about "Odysseus" as "if there is such and such a Bedeutung" and still assume that there was none. Yet Frege does not seem to consider the above questions. He simply holds that to signify a Bedeutung for the name "Odysseus" is impossible and fictitious, but to presuppose an object itself for the name "evening star" is justified, (though we should add the skeptical reservation:

"If there is such and such a Bedeutung.")

The question arises whether Frege was fully aware of the descriptive and synthetic character of a sign's Sinn. It is somehow probable that he noticed that the syntactic complex of a definite Sinn, viz. the descriptive phrase or sentence which expresses the Sinn, must fluctuate, if one or more of its aspects change. Can we still express the same Sinn, if, say, one aspect of the "evening star" appears differently?

In order to simplify this discussion, let us say that the Sinn of the sign "evening star" is a connection of the aspects "a.b.c.d.". Could we still express the Sinn of "evening star" with "a.b.c.f."? It appears that perhaps considerations like this made Frege demand that "a sign answers to a definite Sinn". Frege supplements his demand by asserting that a sign's Sinn can be "comprehended by everyone who knows the language".¹ Yet here again it seems that Frege desires to limit his optimism and consequently attempts to make his assertion more reasonable by adding a sort of skeptical reservation.

¹ Ibid., p. 40. My underlining.

It is in his only example of a Sinn, i.e. the Sinn of the sign "Aristotle", where Frege admits that some people might disagree about the Sinn of "true proper names".¹ Frege goes on to say that fluctuations of one Sinn can be tolerated, though they should be avoided in a perfect language. Nonetheless, he still wants to maintain that a sign's Sinn is "non-subjective" and as such a common property of many. Thus "one cannot deny that mankind has a common treasure of thoughts which is transferred from one generation to the next."²

Obviously the Sinn of the signs represents to Frege definite, objective and unchanging expressions about appearances of the world; yet does Frege ever justify his assertion about the fixity of the signs' Sinn? Frege does not furnish any examples which exemplify this fixity. Perhaps he was afraid of disagreement from his readers about the fixity of Sinn in these very examples.

How then is a sign's Sinn, say that of "evening star", expressed? As with a sign's Bedeutung,

¹ Ibid., p. 40.

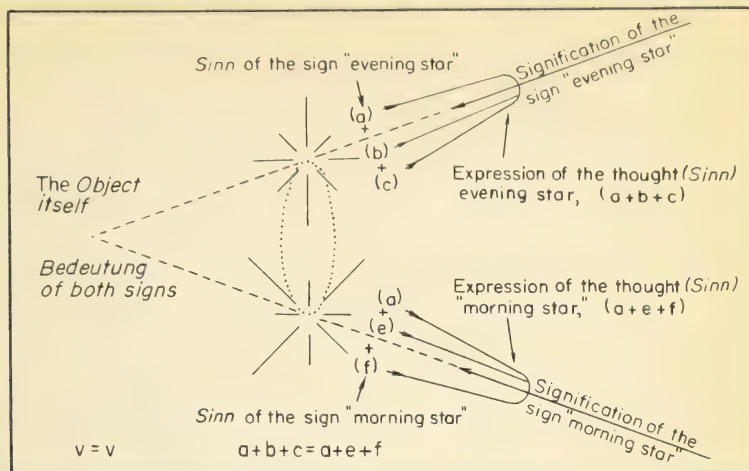
² Ibid., p. 42.

there is no apparent similarity between the sign "evening star" and the "twinkling star which can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset". In contrast to a sign's Bedeutung, we cannot even presuppose a sign's Sinn.

According to Frege, we can only express the Sinn under which an appearance is given to us. It appears that we must "experience" the twinkling star before we can express its Sinn.¹ Somehow we have to connect the different aspects of the appearance in our "mind" in order that we can behold and express it. Let us recall Frege's claim that signs with different Sinn may well signify one and the same Bedeutung.² In this manner both signs: "evening star" and "morning star", in spite of having a different definite Sinn, signify the same object itself. A diagram may help to illustrate Frege's theory:

¹ Of course, the "experience" could be in imagination only; for instance when we read a novel.

² Ibid., p. 40.



Perhaps we are now better equipped to return to the question whether we can ever express any referent's Sinn without simultaneously presupposing a significance (Bedeutung) for it. As we have noticed before, we seem to collect and connect certain aspects around "something" which we presuppose, but never experience as such. Suppose some ancient Greek felt that the evening star was "a god, driving in a chariot his course upon the heavenly plains". No doubt, the Sinn of the sign "evening star" now appears entirely different. It is now made up by peculiarities of a presupposed "god". Frege would

probably object and suggest that this ancient Greek only used different words to express the same definite Sinn; namely he used "god" instead of "star", "driving his course" instead of "in the western sky", and so on; in this manner these terms may be more or less adequately translated into the same Sinn. Even if we grant such a doubtful "translation", we can still easily find cases where different aspects of the same given appearance are employed in order to express a different Sinn. Recalling the red and green apple on my desk, it is obvious that even a colourblind man might identify the apple's red side by different aspects than its colour and thus express its Sinn differently. In accordance with his different sensuous range, the colourblind man may well discriminate a certain speck or texture or shape. Would Frege be bold enough to maintain that "this side of the apple" is still the same "given thing" and thus the same Sinn? Similarly, must we not suspect that our presupposition, influenced by language or society, may lead us also to anticipate and watch for a definite, but limited range of aspects of the appearances? Of course, such a social or linguistic limitation is of a different nature than the psychological limitation of the

colourblind man. At this point we approach one of the problems of contemporary thought which cannot be dealt with in this context, though a few words might well be said in anticipating section (g) and (h). When considering the Fregean Bedeutung as a presupposed object regarded only in itself and stripped of all perceivable properties, it seemed to us that we could gain knowledge only via the given appearances. Only appearances could enable us to apprehend and re-identify a presupposed object. Now, when considering the Fregean Sinn as a connection of aspects, it seems to us that almost the opposite holds, viz. that we tend to apprehend and know only that part of the appearance, to which we are led by our presuppositions. Frege appears to be blind to or unconcerned about the consequences of social or linguistic limitations. He simply takes for granted that the Sinn of a name is definite and permanent.

We should remember that it follows from Frege's theory that even an early astronomer signified the object itself when referring to the evening star. He did this without being aware of what he was signifying, presupposing falsely a "god" as a "Bedeutung" instead of the

object itself. Frege cannot accept the presupposed "god" as the Bedeutung of this astronomer's sign, (because Venus is not a god), but can he accept the "god" as a part of the sign's Sinn? Obviously not, since we know that the Fregian Sinn is also non-subjective, definite and permanent. Can Frege's philosophy give any reasonable account for presuppositions which differ from the Fregian Bedeutung: the object itself? No doubt, within Frege's framework such presuppositions can neither be regarded as a sign's Bedeutung, nor as its Sinn.¹ Perhaps a Positivist would object to the choice of our example, viz. of an early astronomer, pointing out that the highly developed and progressive stage of our

¹ Somebody might suggest that Frege could regard in his system such a "false presupposition" as a presentation (Vorstellung). Yet this classification is quite impossible, since Frege's concept Vorstellung (presentation) always consists of subjective recollections of an individual which are also often "soaked with emotions". (Ibid., pp. 41, ff.) Frege's concept Vorstellung will not do to account for a linguistically accepted presupposition, say of a "god", since such a presupposition may represent a common belief and an ordinary usage within a whole society; for instance among the early Greeks. In other words, a presupposed "god" is too "public" to count as a mere Vorstellung.

society should make us realize that there is no sense in bothering with the ridiculous presuppositions of primitives. Yet, can his objections be accepted after we have realized the absence of any philosophical, logical or other dialectic justification of Frege's own presupposition? Frege's restriction to one and only one possible Bedeutung, viz. the self-identical object, appears to us somehow narrow and overconfident, and indeed unjustified. Frege's theory fails not only to justify his general insistence upon a unique and permanent human presupposition, but fails also to explain the obvious cases of different human presupposition.

(f) The sentence and its relation to Sinn

Frege holds that a sentence always contains (enthält) a thought (Gedanke), but it does not need to have a Bedeutung.¹ He thus distinguishes between two sorts of sentences: sentences with a Bedeutung which he calls

¹ Ibid., p. 44.

propositions (Behauptungssätze), and sentences without a Bedeutung. In a footnote, Frege considers calling these latter sentences which we do not expect to have a Bedeutung: pictures.¹ Now what we should like to know is what both propositions and pictures have in common and how they differ from the simple signs discussed previously.

Frege demands that propositions and pictures alike, must contain a thought (Gedanke). Hence he concludes that a thought can never be a Bedeutung, since the sentence might only be a picture. The thought of a sentence remains the same whether we attribute a Bedeutung to it or not. Now we might be inclined to infer that Frege understood by thought a purely subjective activity, but this is not the case. Frege claims that a thought (Gedanke) as such has an objective content and can thus always become a common property of many.² Any purely subjective mental entity he calls a Vorstellung

¹ Ibid., p. 46. In order to facilitate the clarity of this discussion, I shall adopt Frege's suggestion in spite of his own hesitancy to employ the term throughout his text. In order to avoid any confusion I shall underline the word picture.

² Ibid., p. 44.

(presentation). Objectivity represents therefore the common characteristic of both proposition and picture.

After considering Frege's definition of a sentence's Sinn, we do not need any great imagination to recognize an obvious parallelism between the Sinn of a simple sign and the Sinn of a sentence. We might wonder whether there is really any difference between these two notions? Firstly both simple sign and sentence may contain a Sinn without having a Bedeutung. Secondly both simple sign and sentence contain a Sinn which is objective and potentially a common property of many. Let us recall that we expressed the Sinn of the sign "evening star" with the sentential phrase "the star which can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset". We can now form a sentence which contains explicitly the same Sinn which is expressed implicitly with the sign "evening star". In this manner we can form the following sentence: "The evening star can be seen in the western sky soon after sunset." Obviously there is no significant difference between a sentence's Sinn and a simple sign's Sinn, though we can say that a simple sign expresses implicitly what

a sentence can contain explicitly.¹ Frege uses different verbs respectively to denote the connection between Sinn and simple sign on the one hand, and Sinn and sentence on the other. He says that a sign's Sinn can be expressed, whereas a sentence contains its Sinn. Is there really any significant difference between these two modi of connection? As we recall the preceding section (e), we found that a simple sign's Sinn though being expressed by only one word, represents a definite syntactical connection of the different aspects of a given "thing". Now we find that a sentence's Sinn contains also a definite syntax of different parts. In other words, we find that a sentence can contain what a simple sign may express, viz. a definite and permanent syntax about the apparent world. It appears that Frege never did concern himself with clarifying this relation of sign and sentence. He seems to believe that we could always invent a sign to express the Sinn of a sentence. His essay "Über die wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift" is full of allusions and similes which suggest this

¹ Anticipating my discussion it appears nonetheless worthwhile to point out here that this close parallelism between a sign's Sinn and a sentence's Sinn, fits neatly to the Fregian assumption that a proposition is a proper name. (Ibid., p. 46.)

point. For instance, he compares language with the human hand which must be extended via artificial hands, viz. tools, in order to adjust better to our intentions.¹ Even if we grant Frege that signs express a definite and objective Sinn, we are still inclined to think that signs must be always limited in number. In other words, any language is always a particular language which stresses certain aspects of our world. Yet we can build a far greater number of sentences with our limited vocabulary, being thus able to express explicitly a far greater number of all sorts of Sinn than we can express implicitly through simple signs. This linguistic limitation can be easily demonstrated by picking up the nearest book and attempting to find a word for each sentence contained in it.²

¹ Op. cit., p. 92.

² Frege would probably retort that we could always invent a sign if we really wished to do so. Who could prevent him from expressing, say the Sinn of the sentence: "There is a red apple on my desk," with the sign "a"? Yet there appears to be also a logical limitation to such a procedure. Strictly speaking, by inventing new simple signs (proper names) we only increase the number of potential signs for the formation of new sentences. Thus all possible sentences could never be completed.

After having investigated the common aspect of picture and proposition, we wonder about their difference. Frege warns us against viewing the syntax, say the connection of subject and predicate, as a criterion for a Bedeutung.¹ Thus we cannot check the parts of a sentence in order to find out whether they signify any Bedeutung. What then is it that enables a sentence to have a Bedeutung? Frege declares that we have to grasp any sentence which is a proposition, as a proper name; in other words, we have to see the sentence as a sign for an object.² It is thus a Bedeutung which enables the sentence "to have" a Bedeutung, i.e. to be a proposition.³ Just as with the simple sign, it is not the link between parts of a proposition that connects us to a Bedeutung, but something which "points" directly at a Bedeutung. In contrast to the Sinn of a picture which is only a thought, it is our "striving for

¹ Ibid., p. 47.

² Ibid., p. 46.

³ Frege says literally that a Bedeutung, viz. a truth-value, cannot be a part of a thought, any more than the sun can be a part of a thought. (Ibid., p. 47.)

truth which drives us everywhere to proceed from Sinn to Bedeutung, in the case of propositions."¹ Thus truth itself appears to be at the root of the distinction between picture and proposition. What then is this truth of Frege's which we signify, and to which we are driven via the Sinn of a proposition?

(g) The sentence and its relation to Bedeutung

In order to understand Frege's concept of truth-values better, we must investigate the function of a proposition. We have noticed in the foregoing section (f) that a picture can never signify a Bedeutung. Frege holds that a proposition does not only, like a picture, contain a thought, but is also a proper name. In other words, like a simple sign, a proposition signifies a Bedeutung.² What sort of Bedeutung does a proposition signify and how does a proposition connect to its Bedeutung? We have already

¹ Ibid., p. 46. My underlining.

² Ibid., p. 46.

noticed a close parallelism between a simple sign's Sinn and a sentence's Sinn. Now we should like to know whether there is a similar relation between simple sign and proposition. Furthermore, do signs contained within a proposition also signify; and if they signify, do they signify the same Bedeutung as the proposition in which they are contained? If not, are signifying simple signs a sort of epistemological prerequisite for a proposition's Bedeutung? Now the question arises whether we can ever hope to answer the above questions satisfactorily. In spite of his obvious preference for examples, Frege appears reluctant when it comes to the explication of some of the points, raised in the above questions.

(1) Frege proposes that a proposition signifies a truth-value which is itself an object. He distinguishes between two truth-values; consequently a proposition can signify either one of two objects which Frege calls the true and the false.¹ In this manner all propositions signify one or the other of these two objects, and nothing else.² Obviously the objects, the true and the false,

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 48.

must differ from the objects which simple signs signify, since there exist countless objects of simple signs, but only two objects called the true and the false. What sort of objects are the true and the false and how are they related to the objects of simple signs? We should not underestimate Frege's choice of the word object for his truth-values. In his peculiar way he himself stresses the significance of his naming the truth-values: objects, suggesting that we should not think that we cannot draw "deep conclusions" from this designation.¹ We already know from our previous investigation that "object" in Frege represents something rather different from our normal usage of the word "object". Remember that for Frege the Bedeutung of a simple sign is an object considered only in itself, stripped of all properties other than that of self-identity, and containing in itself an unknowable aspect which we called "Bx".

Frege, insisting that his objects can be properly understood only in connection with his two other terms concept and relation, refers the reader to his essay

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

Begriff und Gegenstand.¹ It seems worthwhile to follow this suggestion in order to find out what the Fregean objects are. For the most part of this paper, we have relied upon the essay Sinn und Bedeutung, but for a while we should divert our attention to Begriff und Gegenstand.² In this latter essay, Frege defends himself against a contemporary's criticism (Benno Kerry), maintaining that a concept is predicative whereas a sign which names an object (a proper name) cannot be used as a predicate.³ Frege suggests as an example the sentence: "Venus is a planet."⁴ He holds that the word "is" should be read as a copula connecting the subject to the predicate. The predicate represents the concept "a planet", under which the object "Venus" falls (fallen unter). Frege reminds us of his criterion according to which the definite article singular, always points to an object, while the indefinite

¹ Ibid., pp. 46, 47. Op. cit., pp. 64-78.

² Op. cit. It should be of some interest to know that Frege published both essays almost simultaneously. They appeared in different journals, but both in the year 1892.

³ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

article "accompanies a concept-word".¹ Consequently, Frege proposes literally that "the concept horse is not a concept".² It seems that he is not afraid of paradoxes when it comes to his sharp distinction between object and concept. How does he justify this distinction. It appears that he employs two kinds of arguments.

Firstly, Frege demonstrates in an intuitive way that there are such things as objects. In this argument he restricts himself to a few lines. Referring to the predicative use of the word "Venus" within the sentence: "The morning star is Venus", Frege maintains that the Bedeutung of the word "Venus" even here within the predicative phrase, can never appear (auftreten) as a concept, but only as an object. He justifies this assertion with the rhetorical question: "Surely it could hardly be disputed (by his opponent), that there is something of this kind." (viz. objects themselves).³ Frege appears to be satisfied with this brief intuitive suggestion, and we are left to grasp

¹ Ibid., p. 67.

² Ibid., p. 69. My underlining.

³ Ibid., p. 67.

the "reality" of the objects themselves by ourselves.¹

Secondly, Frege also employs another argument in order to justify his demand for a distinction between objects and concepts. Here he goes to far greater length in order to argue his case. He suggests that there is a "gap between object and concept" which needs to be "filled". Frege regards his distinction between object and concept as a "difference of the highest importance".² This difference between object and concept seems to rest upon a sort of logical criterion. Let us consider Frege's example, "Venus is a planet." Frege holds that the object signified by the sign "Venus" cannot be further analyzed. This sign for the object itself, stands in sharp contrast

¹ It is clear that Frege's intuitive suggestion about the obvious existence of objects, is somehow related to his theory of the presupposed objects in Sinn und Bedeutung. (p. 46.) Yet in contrast to his presupposed objects, Frege does now not defend himself against "idealistic or skeptical" objections. Remember that he previously added his skeptical reservation: "If there is such and such a Bedeutung." In other words, out of the context of the latter essay, viz. Begriff und Gegenstand alone, we could have never known that there belongs an unknowable factor ("Bx") to each object.

² Begriff und Gegenstand, op. cit., p. 77.

to the predicative phrase: "is a planet". The expression "a planet" can never signify an object, since there is more than one planet. The term "a planet" can only represent a concept. In other words, a sign for an object is always a definite and closed (abgeschlossen) thing, whereas the predicate is not a closed entity. The predication of an object thus represents a category under which the object "falls", and this category is a concept. Frege maintains therefore that in contrast to the closed subject, the predicate is unsaturated.¹ Unfortunately he never fully clarifies his distinction between the closed and unsaturated part of a sentence. Calling his differentiating terms metaphorical expressions (bildliche Ausdrücke), Frege expresses his desire to "restrict himself to hints only".² Unfortunately a mere hint hardly serves to make completely clear just what Frege means by this distinction.

To sum up Frege's arguments for the distinction between objects and concepts: We find that Frege uses both an intuitive and a metaphorical approach. It is rather

¹ Ibid., p. 78.

² Ibid., p. 78. My underlining.

difficult to accept either argument. On the one hand, it is impossible for us to accept Frege's intuitive appeal where he demands an admission by silently anticipating the acknowledgment of his opponents. On the other hand his "metaphorical" argument is hardly complete and leaves much to be desired by way of clarity. Since Frege's own justification for the "difference of the highest importance" appears of little help to us, we should attempt to go directly to the rest of Frege's work. Here an untiring Frege returns again and again to the distinction between closed and unsaturated parts of a sentence.¹ What does Frege actually mean when he distinguishes between closed and unsaturated parts of a sentence? Perhaps some of the passages may help us to understand.² Frege tells us for instance that in denoting "different, but similar things with the same sign, we no longer signify a single object but denote that which

¹ Consider for instance: Über die wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift, op. cit., pp. 90, 91, 92, 93; Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., pp. 17, 18, 27, 28, 29; Sinn und Bedeutung, op. cit., pp. 46, 47, 48; Begriff und Gegenstand, op. cit., pp. 64-78; Was ist eine Funktion, op. cit., pp. 81, 82.

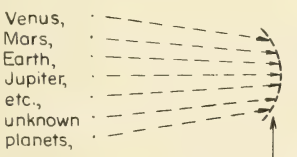
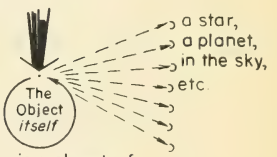
² Viz., those quoted in the preceding footnote.

these things have in common."¹ It is this common aspect of different things which enables us to denote a concept. Why then is the concept-word unsaturated? After all we do fully understand the common aspect or concept, represented by, say, "is a planet", within the sentence "Venus is a planet." Frege tells us in another place that the "second part" of the sentence (in our example: "is a planet"), contains an empty place which has to be "filled" with a proper name (simple sign) in order to produce a closed and definite Sinn.² If we consider Frege's assertion carefully, we realize that the predicative nature of a concept always demands a completion, viz. something of which it can be predicated. Thus the sharp distinction between concept

¹ "Über die wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift", op. cit., p. 90. My underlining.

² Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., p. 27. It is probably of interest to note that Frege employs a different term in this essay for his predicative concept. Here he uses the term unsaturated part of a function. Frege's main topic, mathematics, seems to suggest this sort of terminology. His specific example (viz. "Caesar conquered Gaul."), does not leave any room for doubt that he meant to include all sorts of propositions when talking about the unsaturated part of a function. Moreover, he himself declares just before this passage, that "the linguistic form of a (mathematical) equation is a proposition." (p. 26.)

and object seems to be founded upon the predicate's need for completion on the one hand, and the subject's autonomy on the other hand. Suppose we have a concept of some "different, but similar things", say for instance "planets", then we must also say which object falls under the concept "planet". An illustration might help to bring out Frege's distinction:

The Incompleteness of the Predicate as <i>unsaturated</i> part of the sentence		The Autonomy of the Subject as <i>closed</i> part of the sentence	
the <i>absence</i> of a subject-term	the <i>presence</i> of a denoting predicate	the <i>presence</i> of a subject-term	the <i>absence</i> of a denoting predicate
<p>Objects themselves { Venus, Mars, Earth, Jupiter, etc., unknown planets, }</p>  <p>".... is a planet."</p>		<p>"Venus"</p>  <p>(".... is a planet, of our solar system.")</p>	
Absence of a <i>Bedeutung</i>	Presence of an objective, but indefinite <i>Sinn</i>	Presence of a <i>Bedeutung</i> and its implicit <i>Sinn</i>	Absence of an explicit <i>Sinn</i>

In contrast to the unsaturated predicate which enables us to denote "similarity in different things", Frege comprehends the closed subject-term as being the sign of one definite object, which can be represented as

"closed up" and thus signified with a simple sign. It seems that Frege calls the object's sign "closed", because the object itself does not need, and cannot be given, any further description. With the help of our illustration we can understand why the closed subject-term does not need any further definition. From Frege's doctrine of the objectivity of a sign's Sinn, it is obvious that the implicit Sinn of a subject-term suffices to "supplement" the sign's Bedeutung, thus rendering it autonomous and complete. For example, as has been previously shown, the term "Venus" implicitly contains its Sinn (e.g. "is a planet of our solar system"), whereas the expression "is a planet" is in itself incomplete until a subject-term is explicitly connected with it.¹ Frege says therefore in another place that an object is everything which is not a predicate, and that the sign for the object does not contain any empty places.² Remember that Frege's object can be known

¹ Cf. section (f), p. 39, of this paper.

² Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., p. 28. I have indicated before in Footnote 2 on p. 50 of this paper that we can regard Frege's "unsaturated part of a function" as a predicate.

only via the given appearances of the object. These appearances under which an object is given, (though objective), do not constitute the object itself. On the contrary, these aspects of an object can be expressed only as the implicit Sinn of the object itself. The implicit aspects constitute therefore something quite different from the object signified.¹

What then do signs (subject-terms) signify and what is an object itself whose autonomy is so evident to Frege? Our question as to the nature of the object itself is not irrelevant, since we saw that Frege set out to develop a sign system for concepts; remember he proposes that language is not governed by logical laws alone.² Let us now consider Frege's term object itself grammatically. It means simply what it says: the object itself, viz. it itself. Frege's employment of the reflexive pronoun already suggests in a grammatical way the reflexive nature of an object

¹ Cf. section (e), pp. 35, 36 of this paper.

² "Über die wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift, op. cit. pp. 90, 93. For further passages about the necessity for considering signs as connecting to the world, cf. Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., pp. 24-30; Sinn und Bedeutung, op. cit., p. 46.

identical with itself. We can easily see that this interpretation coincides with our aforesaid contention about the difference between a sign's Sinn and its Bedeutung.¹ The "object itself" is closed insofar as we cannot predicate any further aspects, but self-identity to it; any "attribution" to the object can be only understood as an implicit Sinn of, or an explicit predication to the "object itself". That our contention about the self-identical nature of objects is more than mere phantasy can be shown by the help of the Fregean text. Defending himself against objections about his objects, Frege asserts that "a man grows older, but if we were unable to recognize him as the same man, then we would have nothing of which we could say that it grew older."² Now we should like to ask why Frege does not come out into the open and announces that the object itself is constituted by nothing else, but the self-identity of a "something" stripped of all Sinn or predication? Perhaps we should pause and reflect once more upon his

¹ Cf. section (d) and (e) of this paper.

² Was ist eine Funktion? Op. cit., p. 81. My underlining.

skeptical reservations, viz. the unknown factor "Bx" which should be added to each sign for an object. Strictly speaking, it is logically impossible to assert the existence of a self-identical object and at the same time attribute to it an unknowable factor, since the unknowable factor "Bx" might, as we have seen, involve the fact that the object itself does not even exist. Hence we cannot presuppose self-identity of the object, since the unknowable factor "Bx" may just result either in a constant flux of a given object, or in a non-existence of a given object; and surely we cannot assert self-identity in either of these cases. It appears that neither self-identity, nor existence of a given object can be found via logical considerations; only empirical sciences could perhaps furnish reasonable evidence for one or the other case.

The question about Frege's omission to state clearly the self-identical nature of his objects themselves necessitates an anticipation of our final attempt to clarify his justification for his "signification system of concepts". We recall that it is Frege's aim to develop a system of concepts which connects precisely to the world

of appearances. Frege's system seems to be based upon his sharp distinction between the closed and the unsaturated parts of a sentence. What really is Frege's justification for his distinction? It is not difficult to distinguish between our three sources for the Fregean justification. There are on the one hand Frege's direct efforts to justify his views. These efforts could be divided into the aforementioned intuitive and metaphorical strands of argument. There is on the other hand the rest of Frege's work which helped us in a more indirect way to understand the reasons for his assertions.

Let us first briefly reconsider Frege's direct justifications. Clearly his intuitive justification is very short and merely appeals to what he seems to consider to be obvious. Remember that he just assumes that we are free to employ any sign whatsoever to signify a Bedeutung, - that there exists a public fund of signs which express an objective Sinn, - that we presuppose an object itself though we can never be really sure about it, - that the object itself must exist, - and that there are two objects called

the true and the false.¹ Frege's intuitive assertions appeal to the common sense of his readers; he seems to think it unnecessary to give any reasons for these assertions. His intuitive appeal stands in contrast to his metaphorical arguments. Frege does supply reasons of a sort for this latter argument, though he refuses to call them definitions. Consequently, he maintains that he is giving hints only. In his metaphorical arguments he does not refer to what is "obvious", but to a vague sort of logical necessity. Here he argues for the distinction between closed and unsaturated parts of the sentence. In spite of appealing to his scientific work as a logician, Frege never develops any concise logical arguments for his "discovery".² Our attention was therefore drawn to the rest of Frege's work where our findings proved to be more illuminating. This third source for Frege's justification shows that his demand for a distinction between object and concept stems from his logico-grammatical distinction between

¹ Cf. Sinn und Bedeutung, op. cit., p. 46. Frege maintains here that the objects: the true and the false are recognized by everyone.

² Cf. Begriff und Gegenstand, op. cit., pp. 64, 65.

the constituents of a sentence. Frege seems to feel that only a simple sign as subject-term within a sentence can be connected to an object itself, though both constituents of a sentence, viz. the signifying simple sign as well as the predicate-term refer to something objective. Frege's "difference of the highest importance" seems to be based upon the following logico-grammatical considerations:

(i) There must be such things as objects themselves, since a simple sign must be able to connect to something that is fixed and definite.

(ii) The simple sign within a sentence must thus connect to a single and definite object, viz. the object itself, which represents one, and only one objective instance of the world.

(iii) The predicate-sign within a sentence, though denoting something objective, viz. what is the common in different things, cannot connect precisely to one specific instance of the world.

Frege seems to think that we cannot say something true or false, if our words do not connect to definite instances of the apparent world. The object itself

constitutes such an instance for Frege. A proposition needs therefore at least one such fixed point in order to be closed. Only the signified object itself guarantees such a fixed point to which a proposition can become connected, only then can a proposition signify. Thus the objective, but indeterminate concept can become fixed and connected via the objective and determinate subject-term of the proposition.¹

(2) In order to facilitate the clarity of the following discussion, it is important to recognize and recall a few points.

Firstly, Frege distinguishes between signs which signify and signs which do not signify. For instance he suggests that a true proposition, uttered by an actor on the stage, does not signify its Bedeutung.² Thus he maintains that signs can serve for the signification of a Bedeutung, but need not necessarily do so. Thus we can compare the words in a dictionary, or the propositions within a scientific book with a storeroom of the city

¹ Cf. Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., p. 27.

² Sinn und Bedeutung, op. cit., p. 47.

traffic department which is full of traffic signs. These signs, though they are signs do not signify unless taken out and used within a certain traffic situation. Consequently, I shall most of the time attribute the term "signifying" to the subsequent "sign" in order to keep Frege's view in mind.

Secondly, as we have noticed, Frege considers propositions to be also proper names. In order to avoid confusion between the latter and proper names in the ordinary usage, I shall restrict my term "signifying sign" to the usage of simple signs (names).

Thirdly, we must recall our dilemma expressed in section (e) of this paper. Remember that it seemed to us on the one hand, when considering the Fregian Bedeutung as a presupposed object regarded only in itself and stripped of all perceivable properties, that we could gain knowledge of it only via the Sinn, viz. the given appearances. Only appearances could enable us to apprehend and re-identify a presupposed object itself; yet it seemed to us on the other hand, when considering the Fregian Sinn as a connection of aspects, that almost the opposite holds,

viz. that we tend to apprehend and know only that part of the appearance, to which we are led by our presuppositions. Let us call this problematic relation between Sinn and Bedeutung Frege's "dilemma S : B".

Fourthly, let us recall the close parallelism between a simple sign and a proposition. Perhaps we should also know that Frege stresses this parallelism by saying that "one could be (misleadingly) tempted not to recognize the relation of the thought to the true as that of Sinn to Bedeutung."¹ This parallelism between thought and Sinn on the one hand, and between truth and Bedeutung on the other hand, should be clearly recognized by us from the outset. In order to prevent any confusion about these two distinct strands, let us call the strand which is signified by propositions and simple signs: "level of the Bedeutung", and the strand within which propositions and simple signs are used to express thought: "level of the Sinn".²

¹ Sinn und Bedeutung, op. cit., p. 47. My underlining.

² Frege himself for instance, speaks of the "stage (Stufe) of Bedeutungen (the objective)" and of the "stage of the thought". (Ibid., p. 47.)

We should now go back to the Fregian objects. Remember that we asked about the difference in the objects signified by a simple sign, and those signified by a proposition. How does a proposition connect to the truth-values, viz. to the objects: the true and the false? Frege develops his theory about the truth-values in Sinn und Bedeutung.¹ We already know that it is our "striving for truth" which "drives us to proceed from the Sinn to the Bedeutung". Frege refers here primarily to the Sinn and Bedeutung of simple signs though it seems that he has also propositions in his mind.² On the same page, Frege calls the progression from the thought to the object (t/f) a judgment.³ Yet judging is for Frege not only a progression,

¹ Op. cit., pp. 46, 47, 48.

² Ibid., p. 46.

³ For the sake of clarity, I shall employ the single term, "object (t/f)", in preference to Frege's diverse alternatives, (e.g. "truth-values", "Bedeutung", "the true and the false", "the true", "the objects"). The term "object (t/f)" seems to be more adequate than some of Frege's terms, which tend to confuse us. For instance the terms "object" or "Bedeutung" might be understood as referring to the objects of simple signs, rather than of propositions. The sign "object (t/f)" indicates clearly that only truth-values are meant and that each truth-value excludes the other.

but also a regression (Rückgang) in the opposite direction, viz. from the object (t/f) to the thought.¹ Just as in his passages on the distinction between object and concept, Frege insists again that he is not giving any definition. Here again in his discussion of judgment, we can distinguish between an intuitive and a "metaphorical" strand. Nonetheless, it should also be mentioned that Frege's two approaches are here less easily distinguishable and more closely inter-linked than in his arguments on the distinction between concept and object.

What then does judging mean to Frege? How do we progress from the "level of Sinn" to the "level of Bedeutung" and how do we regress again? Let us first consider the metaphorical argument. From the outset of this argument Frege maintains that we have to search for the object (t/f), "if the Bedeutungen of the parts (of the sentence) are in question."² It is obvious that he is here referring to Bedeutungen of the two constituent parts of a closed sentence, viz. to the object signified by the subject-term

¹ Ibid., p. 48.

² Ibid., p. 46. My underlining.

and the concept denoted by the predicate. Frege seems to be saying that we search for the object (t/f), if we search for the object of the subject-term and the concept of the predicate-term; (viz. "... wenn es auf die Bedeutung der Bestandteile ankommt.") In other words we seek the object (t/f) by seeking to establish the existence of the object (Bedeutung of the subject-term) and the concept attributed to it. Now the difficulty is that Frege does not make it clear whether he is making a psychological or a logical connection between seeking the truth-value of a sentence and seeking the Bedeutungen of its constituents. Sometimes it sounds as if he is saying that we seek the constituents because we are interested in the truth-values of the sentence (psychological); and sometimes he sounds as if we seek the constituents insofar as we seek the truth-value (logical). He certainly says that the Bedeutungen of the constituents of the sentence are involved "when and only when we are inquiring after (the sentence's) truth-value."¹

We must read on in order to understand Frege's position better. As we have seen, Frege distinguishes

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

between two stages (Stufen) within a judgment, viz. the stage of thought and the stage of the object (t/f) respectively.¹ He now maintains that the first step in each judgment is that from the thought to the object (t/f), viz. that from the "level of the Sinn" to the "level of the Bedeutung".² Judging thus includes in its first step a progression from thought to the object (t/f).³

Let us first consider his first step, viz. the progression from the "level of the Sinn" (thought) to the "level of the Bedeutung" (object (t/f)). Here we must recall that he, in connection with his distinction between object and concept, maintains that only a subject-term which designates an object, makes a proposition closed.⁴ Now the question arises, how can a proposition be formed without

¹ Ibid., p. 47.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.

³ Here it should be mentioned that Frege even says that "judgments can be regarded as progression from a thought to a truth-value (object (t/f)). *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴ Cf. Funktion und Begriff, op. cit., p. 27, where Frege holds that "... erst dadurch, dass diese erste Stelle von einem Eigennamen ausgefüllt wird ... kommt ein abgeschlossener Sinn (des Behauptungssatzes) zum Vorschein."

immediately presupposing an object for the subject-term? Let us reconsider Frege's example: "Venus is a planet." In forming this sentence, we begin with the sign: "Venus ...". How can we ever think this name without immediately presupposing and thus signifying its Bedeutung, viz.: Venus itself? According to Frege's distinction between closed and unsaturated parts of a proposition, we must signify the Bedeutung, viz. Venus itself in order to close the proposition. Remember that only a closed proposition is able to signify. Besides, how do we think the whole sentence without immediately forming a signifying sign for the object? If we do not immediately presuppose a Bedeutung for the sign, say "Venus", how do we know that we do not signify the "Venus" of Milo in the Louvre, instead of the planet Venus? Remember that Frege's doctrine of the objective Sinn does not really account for the fixed connection between a sign's Bedeutung and its Sinn. We have already questioned the objectivity of the Sinn, and it is possible to develop a new argument to show that the Bedeutung of the subject-term, say for instance, Venus itself, cannot be thought only, when we form the proposition:

"Venus is a planet." Suppose de Gaulle has just given orders to shoot the Venus of Milo into orbit around the sun in order to establish the cosmic prestige of France. Which Venus do we now refer to, if we think the sign's Sinn without immediately signifying its Bedeutung, which according to Frege, is the object itself? Which Venus itself do we now mean with our proposition? If we grant that Frege's distinction between object and concept holds, then we should like to know: to which object do we attribute the concept "a planet"? Remember, Frege suggests that judgment can be regarded as progression from the thought to the truth-value.¹ In other words, we progress from the "level of the Sinn" to the "level of the Bedeutung". Yet is it possible that the subject-term within the "level of the Sinn" can be thought without immediately presupposing an object for it on the "level of the Bedeutung"?

Recalling Frege's "dilemma B : S", we remember that a simple sign's Sinn as a connection of aspects was knowable only as "that part" of the appearance to which

¹ Ibid., p. 48.

we are led by our presuppositions.¹ Similarly, now we could say that only the presupposition of a determinate Bedeutung for "Venus" makes it possible for us to connect the second part ("is a planet") of our proposition with it. Very likely, Frege must have had some notion of this dilemma, since he attempts to justify his logical theories by insisting that he is not giving definitions and that judging is something "unique and incomparable".²

However, judging is for Frege not only a progression from the thought to the object (t/f), but also a regression in the opposite direction.³ In this manner judging includes a sort of movement and counter-movement. How then do we regress from the object (t/f) back to the thought? Frege maintains that judging is a distinguishing (Unterscheiden) of "parts" within the object (t/f). Nevertheless, this distinguishing is done by regressing to the thought. No doubt, it is this regression

¹ Cf. p. 34 of this paper.

² Ibid., p. 48.

³ Ibid., p. 48.

from the "level of the Bedeutung" to the "level of the Sinn" which enables us to distinguish between "parts" of the Bedeutung, viz. the object (t/f). Yet, at the same time Frege maintains that his way of speaking about parts is suspect, since "the whole Bedeutung and one part of it do not suffice to determine the other part."¹ This sentence is rather important, since it appears to be the only passage in Sinn und Bedeutung, in which he refers simultaneously to the Bedeutung of the proposition (viz. the object (t/f)) and to the Bedeutungen of the parts of the proposition (viz. the object itself and the concept). In this sentence he distinguishes between three sorts of Bedeutung: (i) Bedeutung of the whole proposition, (ii) Bedeutung of the determinate (bestimmt) part of the sentence, and (iii) Bedeutung of the undetermined part of the sentence. Surely, with his phrase "Bedeutung of the whole", Frege can hardly mean anything else, but the object (t/f); this phrase cannot possibly refer to the object (Bedeutung of the subject-term), since the sign signifying such an object does not constitute the whole, but only a part of the sentence. Likewise, Frege can only mean the determinate part of the sentence, viz. the simple

¹ Ibid., p. 48.

sign, when he contrasts the "Bedeutung of one part" (of the sentence) with "the other undetermined" (part of the sentence). In this manner, Frege seems to maintain that everything is determined within the object (t/f), whereas only one part is determined within the sentence. In other words, everything is determined upon the "level of the Bedeutung" and only one part is determined within the "level of the Sinn". Frege insinuates that in contrast to the "whole" object (t/f) on the "level of the Bedeutung", not everything is determined within the "level of the Sinn". How can anything be determined, if a judgment ends with a regression to the thought, since it is only the Bedeutung which makes a proposition determinate? Can there be anything determinate within the "level of the Sinn"? Again we should note that Frege must have had some notion of his dilemma, since he suggests that "everything particular" within the object (t/f) is obliterated.¹

As we have noticed before, there exists a close parallelism between Bedeutung and Sinn of simple sign

¹ Ibid., p. 48.

and the Bedeutung and Sinn of a proposition.¹ Remember that Frege stresses the fact that one could be (misleadingly) tempted not to recognize the relation between the thought and the true as that of Sinn and Bedeutung. Of course, we also know from the beginning of this section (g) that a proposition should be regarded as a proper name. Furthermore, we know from section (f) that there is also a close parallelism between the Sinn of a sign and the Sinn of a proposition. Consequently, it is now obvious that a proposition signifies one, and only one determinate object, viz. the object (t/f). In other words, a proposition cannot at the same time signify both the object (t/f) and an object itself, (i.e. the kind of object a subject-term signifies). Remember that Frege sets out to develop a system of signs which connects precisely and unambiguously. According to Frege's logico-grammatical convictions which have been indicated before, it is surely impossible that propositions could at the same time signify two different Bedeutungen.

¹ Ibid., pp. 46, 47, 48. Frege indicates this parallelism several times.

It seems almost as if the subject-term within a proposition cannot signify its Bedeutung (viz. the object itself); Frege is forced to depict the proposition as containing nothing else than an explicit Sinn, i.e. a thought only. In other words, he just moves one Bedeutung, (viz. the object signified by the subject-term of the proposition) from the "level of the Bedeutung" to the "level of the Sinn", in order to enable the proposition to signify unambiguously one and only one Bedeutung, (viz. the object (t/f)).

Until now we have tacitly and without argument accepted the object (t/f). Now we want to ask what sort of entity this object (t) and this object (f) is? How do we recognize the object (t) and the object (f), and how are they related to each other? Remember that the object signified by a simple sign, seems to be nothing else, than the self-identity of a logical "something". We also found such a signified Bedeutung cannot really connect to its Sinn. Moreover when considering Frege's skeptical reservation "Bx", we found that even existence and self-identity of such a Bedeutung appear to be always in question. The unknowable factor "Bx" may anytime result in our being

forced to cancel a presupposition of an object. Consider for instance the Bedeutung of the following signifying signs: "Venus", "de Gaulle" and "this apple". Obviously, each of these signs signifies each object respectively; e.g. Venus itself, -- stripped of all Sinn, -- but inclusive of the skeptical reservation "Bx". Thus we can denote Frege's assertion as to the object's existence with the symbol " $V \supset (V \equiv V)$ ". Likewise we can assert the existence of the presupposed object "de Gaulle" and "this apple" thus: " $d\ G \supset (d\ G \equiv d\ G)$ " and " $A \supset (A \equiv A)$ ". It is not difficult to see that all possible objects themselves can be asserted to exist by one general formula, viz. by " $x \supset (x \equiv x)$ ". If we now follow Frege's hint and attempt to draw "deep conclusions" from his calling the truth-values of propositions, objects, then we must look for some parallelism or connection between the characteristics of these different kinds of objects. Surely, we could hardly draw any analogy which is based upon the difference between objects themselves and the object (t/f). After all we can only draw conclusive parallels between similar things. As we have seen before, the only characteristics of the presupposed object itself

seem to be self-identity and the skeptical factor "Bx"; remember that we generalized: " $x \supset (x \equiv x)$ ". Now we should like to know whether the object (t/f) has also one or both of these two characteristics of the objects themselves.

No doubt, the skeptical factor "Bx" alone, could hardly become a characteristic of the object (t), since its skeptical proviso "Bx", would never permit us to acknowledge a truth. Only the self-identity of the object itself could be also a characteristic of the object (t). It appears that the object (t) signified by a proposition, has just this characteristic of selfidentity; in other words we could say that the truth is just what it is.

At a first glance it seems plausible that the object (f) is also self-identical. Yet there appears to arise some difficulty. We can somehow imagine and understand that the signified truth, viz. the object (t) as being self-identical, but is a signified falsity really conceivable? Of course we can say that the object (f) is identical with itself, but what does this mean? Remember that objects are signified appearances and not expressed in thought only. In normal language as well as

in logic we seem to base the falsity, (viz. the object (f)) of a proposition, upon the denial of a presupposed truth, (viz. the object (t)). Thus we can say: "It is false, (viz. not true) that de Gaulle gave orders to shoot Venus into orbit." In other words, if we say something is false, then we must presuppose a truth, viz. the object (t) of which we can say that it is false. Now it seems that denying the truth, viz. the object (t) does not constitute another entity. It seems that the object (f) cannot be a "something" like the object (t), since it is the very negation of this "something", (viz. the object (t)).¹ Moreover, falsity appears now as a result of the skeptical reservation "Bx"; in other words, if we could not consider a skeptical reservation, then we could hardly question and deny the truth of a proposition, (viz.

¹ Within the range of this paper it is impossible to exhaust this difficult aspect of negation. However it might be of some interest to know that Frege's pupil, Wittgenstein, concerned himself in his early years with this aspect of negation. For instance he asserts in his notebook: "Non-truth is like non-identity." (Notebooks 1914-1916, by Ludwig Wittgenstein; Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1961; p. 34.)

the object (t)).

Now it seems that both characteristics of the objects, viz. self-identity as well as the unknowable factor "Bx" are somehow also the characteristics of the object (t/f). As we have noticed above, there seems to be a parallelism between the self-identity of the objects and the object (t) on the one hand; on the other hand, there seems to be also a parallelism between the unknowable factor "Bx" attributed to each object, and the object (f). Frege's object (t) and object (f), though excluding and presupposing each other alternately, appear to stand in a more complex relation to each other.

Until now we have only considered Frege's metaphorical arguments for the existence of the object (t/f). A glance at Frege's intuitive argument should be helpful at this point. Just as with his previous intuitive argument for the distinction of objects and concepts, Frege does not waste many words in arguing for the existence of the object (t/f). He just assumes without much ado that both the object (t) as well as the object (f) "are acknowledged, if only implicitly, by everybody who judges something to be

true; even by the skeptic". Frege supplements this argument in a footnote, maintaining that judging "is not a mere grasping of a thought, but the acknowledgment of its truth."¹ Frege's intuitive argument contains as it were in a nutshell the whole "dilemma B : S".

Frege's object (t) and object (f) are therefore acknowledged by everybody who makes a judgment. On this stage of judgment, both the object (t) and the object (f) appear side by side, representing somehow two equivalent objects which can be signified by different propositions at the same time. Any proposition signifies thus either the object (t) or the object (f). Either a proposition is true or it is false. It seems that this stage of decision corresponds to the stage of the thought, (viz. the "level of the Sinn"), within Frege's metaphorical argument. Remember that the regression back to the thought entails a distinguishing of parts within the "Bedeutung of the whole", viz. the object (t/f). We must so to speak, compare within the "level of the Sinn" and decide whether we signify either the object (t) or the object (f). It is

¹ Ibid., pp. 46, 47.

now evident that within Frege's "level of the Sinn", both the object (t) and the object (f) are thought as realities between which we have to decide. Although both the object (t) and the object (f) cannot be signified simultaneously by one proposition, both objects (t.f) must still be pre-supposed to exist simultaneously side by side. Consider for instance the following two propositions, one signifying the object (t) and the other the object (f):

- (i) There is a lable on my table. (object (f))
- (ii) There is no lable on my table. (object (t))

Within the "level of the Sinn" there seems no room left for the application of Frege's skeptical reservation "Bx". Both the object (t) and the object (f) must be thought as "something" and somehow presupposed as objects and we cannot possibly voice any skeptical reservation about their existence. How could we otherwise decide between them? If we accept Frege's theory of the truth-values being objects, then we must conclude that any proposition signifies a Bedeutung, insofar as any proposition must, nolens volens, signify either the object (t) or the object (f). It seems that

the a priori assumption of both the object (t) and the object (f) stems from the logico-grammatical consideration about our ability to decide clearly between the truth or falsity of a proposition. Yet it is not difficult to form countless scientific propositions which are obviously either true or false, though we do not know which is the case. Perhaps some of them we shall never know. Of course, our ignorance does not change the fact that these propositions are either true or false. Within the "level of the Sinn" we cannot really make sure whether a proposition is true or false, but we know definitely that we can only signify either the object (t) or the object (f). In other words, we know within the "level of the Sinn" that if we knew enough about the Bedeutung of a proposition, we could decide at once between the object (t) and object (f).

Yet in the same intuitive argument, Frege also maintains that the people who recognize the object (t) and the object (f) include all those who judge something to be true.¹ Remember that he expands this statement with a footnote, maintaining that a judgment

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

is not the mere grasping of a thought, but the acknowledgment of its truth.¹ Just as in his previous metaphorical argument, Frege maintains here also that judging is a progression from the thought to the object (t),-- from the "level of the Sinn" to the "level of the Bedeutung". He indicates more than once that we are driven towards truth when we set out to establish certainty about a proposition.² Moreover, his choice of the term truth-values for both the object (t) and the object (f) also confirms our contention that Frege subordinates falsity, viz. the object (f) within his stage (Stufe) of the truth. After all Frege was free to name his truth-values, say values of decision or false-values.

In contrast to the "level of the Sinn" where object (t) and object (f) appeared to exist side by side, on the "level of the Bedeutung" the object (t) alone exists; it is acknowledged by everybody who makes a judgment. The object (f) appears now subordinated as the mere rejection or negation of the object (t). In

¹ Ibid., p. 47.

² Ibid., pp. 46, 47, 48.

this intuitive argument Frege again restricts himself to hints, giving no reasons why, but only claiming that we set out to find the truth, viz. the object (t). As we have noticed before, we desire to know the truth, viz. the object (t), regardless of whether the proposition signifies the object (t) or the object (f). It is actually unimportant whether I assert either

(i) There is a lable on my table

or

(ii) There is no lable on my table,

when I set out to find the truth about it. On the "level of the Bedeutung" it is only possible to acknowledge "something" or not. We desire to know the object (t), since we do not yet know whether the proposition is true. In other words, if we desire to acknowledge the object (t), then we must also presuppose Frege's skeptical reservation "Bx". Without having doubts about a proposition's truth, we could not desire to know. We would know already. Thus on Frege's "level of the Bedeutung", we must always assert the skeptical proviso "Bx" when we set out to judge. Any particular acknowledgment of a proposition's signified

object (t) entails an acceptance of the object (t) itself and a rejection of the skeptical proviso "Bx". Any non-acknowledgment of a proposition's signified object (t) entails an affirmation of the skeptical reservation.

No doubt, there is a definite difference between Frege's decision between the object (t) and the object (f) within the "level of the Sinn", and Frege's acknowledgment of the object (t) upon the "level of the Bedeutung". Within the former "level of the Sinn" two objects, (viz. the object (t) and the object (f)), are presupposed simultaneously. Yet the a priori existence of both objects seems to be a necessary condition within Frege's system in order to enable us to decide between two distinct objects. Consequently there is no room left within the "level of the Sinn" for voicing any skeptical reservations about the simultaneous existence of both the object (t) and the object (f). How could we otherwise decide between "the being" or "the not-being" of the signified Bedeutung? On the latter "level of the Bedeutung" only one presupposed object appears, viz. the object (t) alone whose existence can be acknowledged or rejected.

Consequently the existence of the object (t) upon the "level of the Bedeutung" is a posteriori and can be questioned, (viz. through asserting the skeptical proviso "Bx"). Upon the "level of the Bedeutung we can never assert a priori that the object (t) exists. Otherwise no acknowledged proposition could be questioned as being or not being true for us.

Perhaps an example could help to bring out this point better. Suppose my neighbour's little boy Karl comes into my room telling me among other things that "Kennedy is dead!" Since I have not yet heard about Kennedy's assassination and also know something about little Karl's phantasies, I presume that the boy has heard something rather different and is now making up a story. In Fregian terminology: I do not acknowledge the object (t), signified by Karl's proposition, and reject it. One hour later, when talking to Karl's mother, I find out that I was mistaken in not acknowledging the object (t) signified by Karl. How then, do we acknowledge the signified object (t)? Let us suppose that Kennedy's wife witnesses the assassination and there is later a moment in the hospital

when the doctor informs her that her husband is dead. According to Frege's theory the widow has to go back to the "level of the Sinn" in order to distinguish between thought and the object (t). Somehow we are able to "follow in our imagination" to the "level of the Sinn", but how does Mrs. Kennedy decide, and how does she find the object (t), viz. the Bedeutung of the whole? Obviously she does not receive the Bedeutung from the mouth of the doctor, nor could she get it from the shooting incident alone. Perhaps she can see the body of her husband on the surgical table, but this could not be the object (t) either. Just as with the Bedeutung of a simple sign, we still want to ask, where is the object (t) itself? No doubt, we have difficulties in seeing where and how the syntax of the doctor's proposition connects and unites with the object (t), and thus with the world of appearances. It seems that on the "level of the Bedeutung the object (t) is just as hidden as the presupposed object of the simple signs, only that the former is signified by a proposition and the latter by a simple sign. Both the object (t) as well as the object have the same characteristics, viz. both are self-identical, both are

stripped of all possible Sinn, and both have an attached skeptical proviso "Bx".

(h) Concluding remarks

In his essay Funktion und Begriff, Frege clearly expresses a demand for a sharp distinction between the "level of the Sinn" and the "level of the Bedeutung". Speaking on judgment, he proposes that the "separation of the act of judging from the subject-matter of judgment seems to be indispensable; for otherwise we could not express a mere supposition, -- the positing of a case, without a simultaneous judgment as to its arising (Eintreten) or not."¹ This passage is a good expression of Frege's concern and basic approach towards his "sign system for concepts". It also represents a good example of his distinction between the "level of the Sinn" and the "level of the Bedeutung". From the beginning to the end of our discussion we were able to trace different aspects of this distinction like a red

¹ Op. cit., p. 30. My underlining.

thread running through the divers passages. It appears in the distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung, between concept and object, and finally between the "level of the Sinn" and the "level of the Bedeutung". It is perhaps a good procedure to view Frege's thought under the aspect of his dichotomy of the level of appearances and the level of language. At the same time we must consider his efforts to bridge these two levels with his "sign system for concepts". Frege bases his distinction upon certain epistemological convictions of which he himself seems not be fully aware. As we have seen in our discussion, he fails to develop any rationally stringent justification for both the differentiation as well as the divers connections between the level of appearances and the level of language.

It sometimes appears as if he wishes to distinguish between an unconceptualized world of appearances on the one hand, and a conceptualized world of language (posited signs) on the other hand. His problem seems to arise most sharply for him in cases like the appearance of a new star. The nova has to appear first, before an astronomer can posit a sign for it. It seems that Frege

aims to develop and to justify his "new" language, viz. his "sign system for concepts" which, he believes, would enable philosophers and scientists to adequately connect their language to the world of appearances. Objects signified upon the level of appearances seem to have only one "characteristic", namely self-identity. They are signified by simple signs on the level of language. All the other characteristics of the objects cannot be signified, but only expressed within the level of language. Frege's doctrine of the objective Sinn attributes, within the level of language to each sign an implicit, but objective and public set of characteristics which are rather similar to the ordinary dictionary definition.¹ We might compare the simple sign with a flagpole connecting firmly to both levels. The ground in which the flagpole stands represents the object, on the level of appearances, and the flag attached to the flagpole represents the implicit, but objective and

¹ Of course, Frege also leaves room for the introduction of new signs, but it is important to recognize that language represents for him an established fund of public signs.

public Sinn within the level of the language. To each flagpole belongs a particular flag which is registered in the public index of language. It appears that logico-grammatical considerations constitute the basis of Frege's theory. He projects, so to speak, the logical self-identity of the sign, (e.g. "Venus" = "Venus") from the level of language into the level of appearances by presupposing the existence of the object itself, (e.g. Venus = Venus). Moreover, in order to enable language to "expand" with reference to the object itself, i.e. to say something about the object, Frege, within the level of language, connects the sign with a set of implicit, but objective and public characteristics, (e.g. "Venus" = "a planet of our solar system").

However, he wishes not only to connect his two distinct levels with simple signs, but also with propositions. Remember that the signifying sign is always restricted to the expression of one definite Sinn alone. After all, we want to assert more things than dictionary definitions, as for instance, that de Gaulle is the present president of France.

Just as at the beginning of his essay Sinn und Bedeutung, Frege emphasizes again at its end that the syntax of a sentence ("a = b"), contains an intrinsic cognitive value (Erkenntniswert). Comparing the cognitive value of a proposition ("a = b") with that of an explicitly identical statement ("a = a"), Frege concludes his essay:

"... If now $a = b$, then indeed the Bedeutung of "b" is the same as that of "a", and hence the truth-value (object (t/f)) of "a = b" is the same as that of "a = a".
In spite of this, the Sinn of "b" may differ from that of "a", and thereby the Sinn expressed in "a = b" differs from that of "a = a". In that case, the two sentences do not have the same cognitive value. If we understand by judgment the progression from the thought to the truth-value (object (t)), ... we can say that the judgments are different."¹

¹ Op. cit., p. 63. Underlining and expressions in parentheses are mine.

No doubt, this passage is another expression of Frege's distinction between the level of appearances and the level of posited signs (language) and his attempt to connect the two.

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